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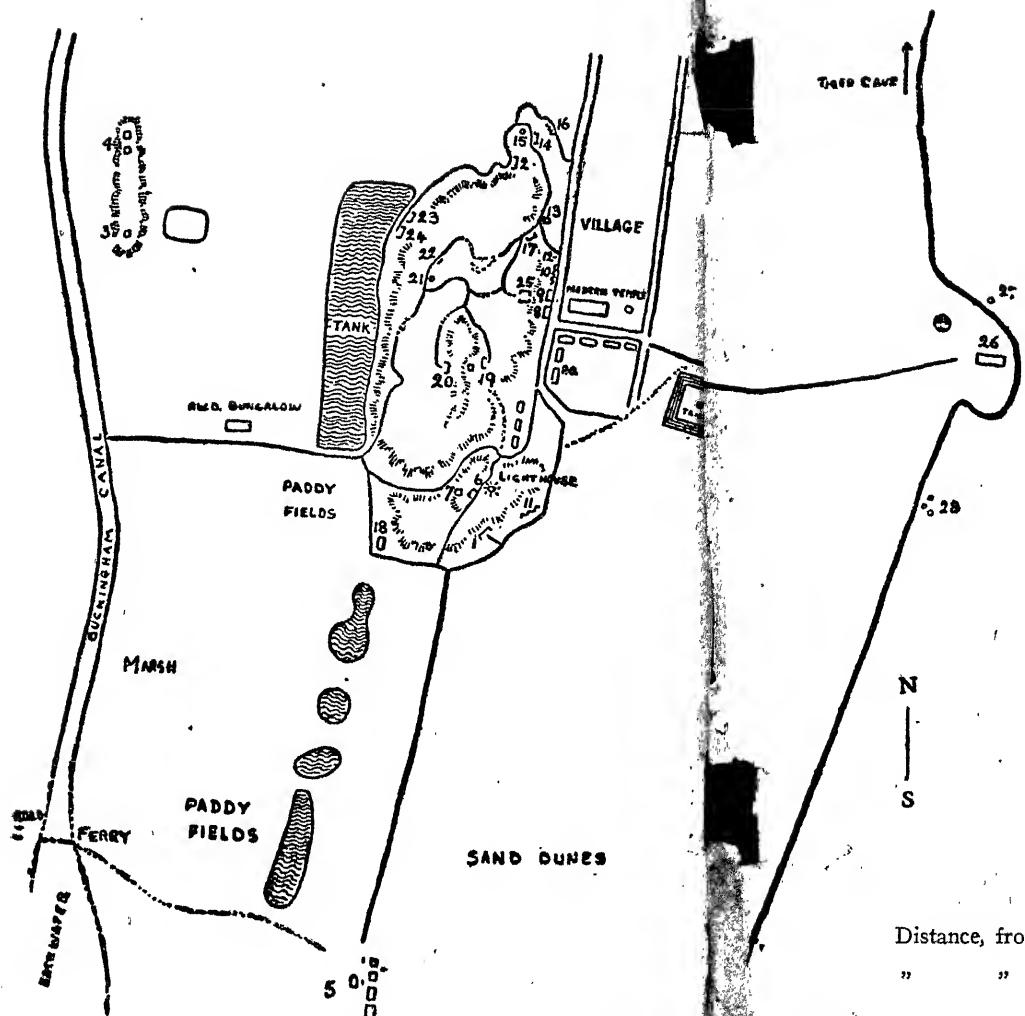
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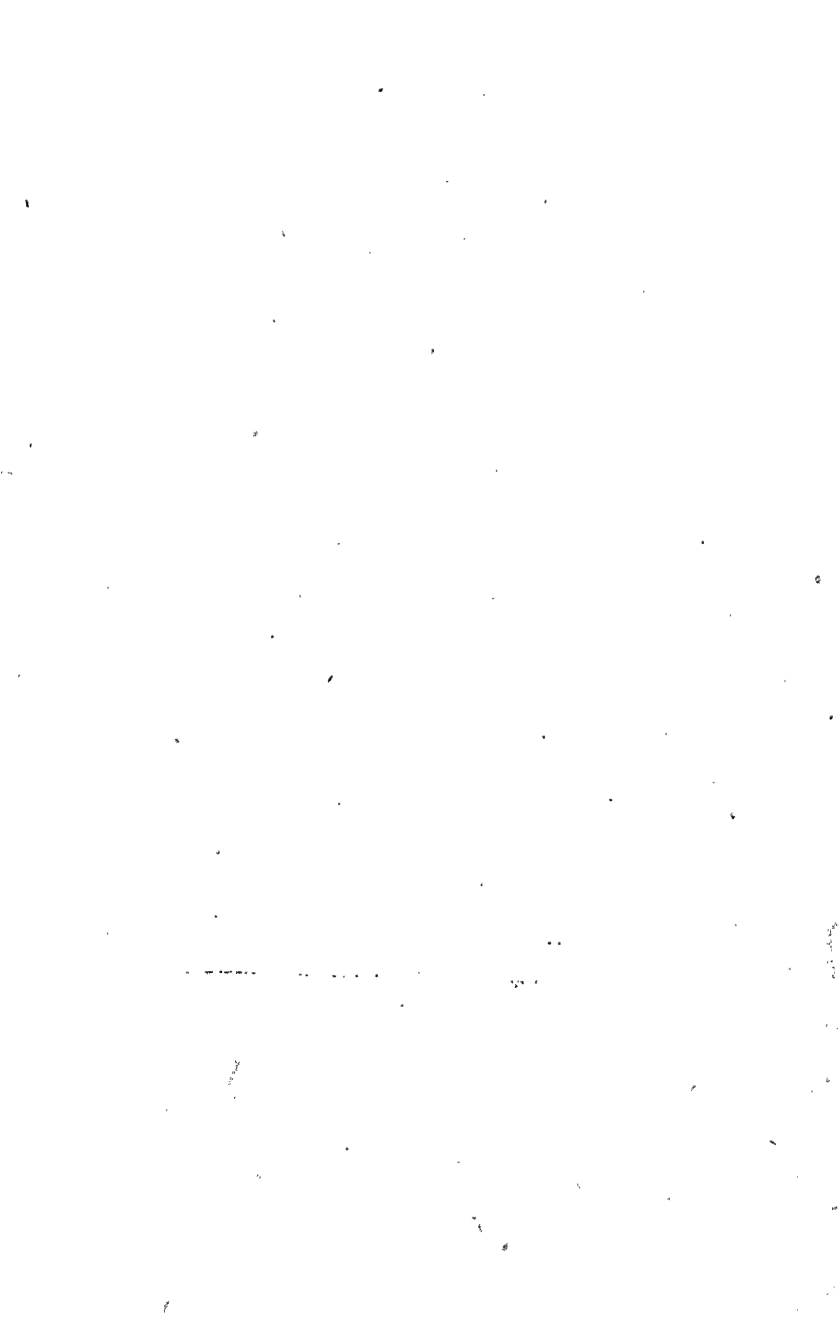
# SKETCH MAP



## REFERENCE.

- 1 Dharmaraja's Mandapa
- 2 Kotikal Mandapa
- 3 Valaiyankuttai Ratha
- 4 Pidari Rathas
- 5 Five Rathas
- 6 Mahishasura Mandapa
- 7 Olakeswara Temple
- 8 Krishna Mandapa
- 9 Pancha Pandava Mandapa
- 10 Arjuna's Penance
- 11 Unfinished Arjuna's Penance
- 12 Monkey Group
- 13 Ganesa Ratha
- 14 Trimurthi Temple
- 15 Gopi's Churn
- 16 Elephant Group
- 17 Varaha Mandapa
- 18 Varaha Temple
- 19 Ramanuja Mandapa
- 20 Unfinished Mandapa
- 21 Draupadi's Bath
- 22 Lion Throne
- 23 Unfinished Mandapa
- 24 Five-celled Saivite Temple
- 25 Gateway
- 26 Shore Temple
- 27 Mahishasura Rock
- 28 Carved Rocks

Distance, from Bungalow to Shore Temple  $\frac{3}{4}$  Mile  
 " " " " Five Rathas  $\frac{1}{2}$  Mile



# MAHABALIPURAM

OR

## SEVEN PAGODAS

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BY

D. R. FYSON

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**The Back Water.**

## **INTRODUCTION.**

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On the coast about 53 miles south of Madras is the site of Mahabalipuram, commonly known as the Seven Pagodas, which is one of the most fascinating places in India ranking in interest with Ajanta, Ellora and Elephanta. The celebrated Rock-cut temples were hewn under the orders of various Kings of the Pallava Dynasty during the 6th and 7th centuries. The bewildering specimens of sculpture and architecture that have survived devastation and ruin afford a glimpse of the glorious past and form an interesting chapter in the cultural history of India.

Access to this historic site is by good motor road through the typical South Indian rice field scenery and beautiful avenues of coconut palms and banyan trees. The road from Madras passes through Chingleput, another historical place which has the remains of an ancient fort. Midway between Chingleput and Mahabalipuram is the village of Thirukallikundram where there is a large temple and a sacred hill. Stone steps lead to the summit of this hill and pilgrims ascend daily to watch the feeding at noon of the sacred "eagles" which are said to fly from Benares. These white vultures have been visiting the hill from time immemorial and are said to be the spirits of two saints who attained "Moksha" at this sacred spot and who took a vow to visit the temple everyday to partake of the divine offerings. The waiting priest offers food which the birds take from his hand. Coming down-hill can be seen a cave-temple similar to those of the earliest period at Mahabalipuram. The

temple tank at the foot of the hill is considered especially holy; having curative properties. There are several choultries and rest houses for visitors to stay.

There are regular bus services from Madras to Mahabalipuram, the buses starting from the stand opposite Fort Station. The Government Transport Department is plying special buses on Sundays taking picnic parties at a to and fro charge of Rs. 2-8-0 per head. These special buses start from the stand opposite to the Central Y.M.C.A. at 8.00 in the morning.

It is also possible to reach Mahabalipuram by boat down the Buckingham Canal. This takes about twelve hours and is usually done at night. Camp-cots can be placed on the boat and by moonlight in cool weather, it is a pleasant journey. Arrangements for the hire of the country house-boats can be made with the Wharf Superintendent at Lattice Bridge beyond Adyar. Joining the boat there shortens the journey and avoids all the town part of the Canal.

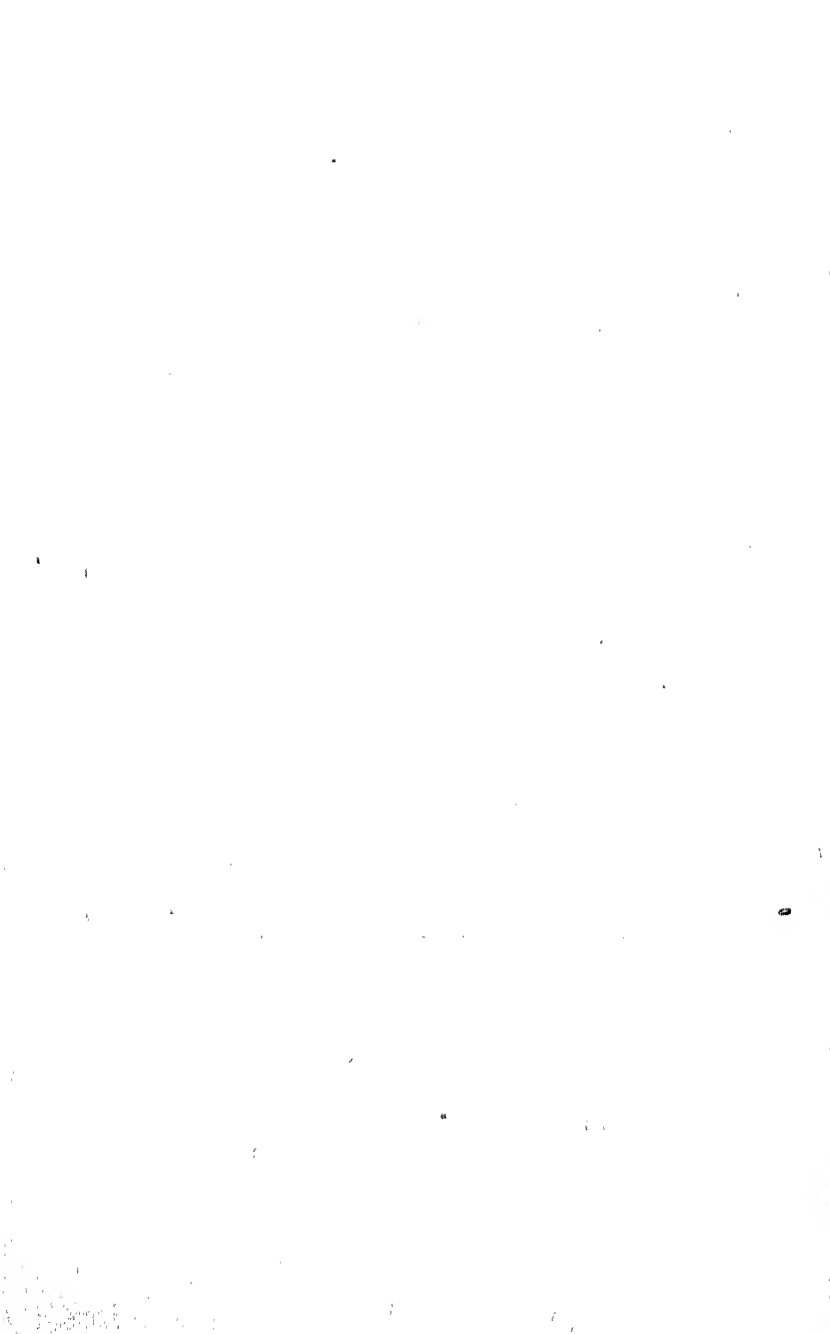
There is a first class Public Works Department Inspection Bungalow at Mahabalipuram. Application for its use must be made to the Collector of Chingleput at the Collector's Office, Saidapet, Madras, and the fee is one Rupee and eight annas a day for each person or two rupees eight annas for a married couple. Advance reservation can be made on payment of one rupee for one set of rooms or two rupees for the entire Bungalow. Parties exceeding five persons can hire the Bungalow for 24 hours on payment of Rs. 5 and for less than 12 hours for Rs. 2-8-0. The bungalow contains two rooms, two bath rooms, and wide verandas. It is furnished 'including Indian and European crockery' and has four beds, but no mattresses, or linen. Local supplies are scarce and visitors must take their own food, but not necessarily a servant, as a boy who can cook is attached to the Bungalow.

The Canal merges here in a backwater, separating Mahabalipuram from the mainland. There is a good bridge over the Canal and cars can go right up to the Shore Temple. The monuments are protected by the Archæological Survey of India, whose local employee will guide the visitors to the various monuments.

Visitors going for the day can be quite independent of the Bungalow if they take food and picnic in the shade. They are requested not to picnic inside the temples and not to leave any litter. Those with limited time should endeavour to see at least the five Rathas, the Mahishasura Mandapa, Arjuna's Penance, the Ganesa Ratha, the Varaha Mandapa and the Shore Temple. For the sake of the view it is well worth climbing to the Gateway on the top of the hill. The Shore Temple should be visited in the evening if possible, as there is little shade, and on the sand the midday sun is very hot.

Mahabalipuram is famous for the excellent sea-bathing it affords.

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## FOREWORD.

This book is intended as an introduction to, and a memento of a fascinating place. It makes no claim to original research.

Those who have time and inclination for further study may consult the works of Mr. A. H. Longhurst. Professor Jouveau-Dubreuil, Dr. S. Krishnaswamy Iyengar, Mr. R. Gopalan and others.\*

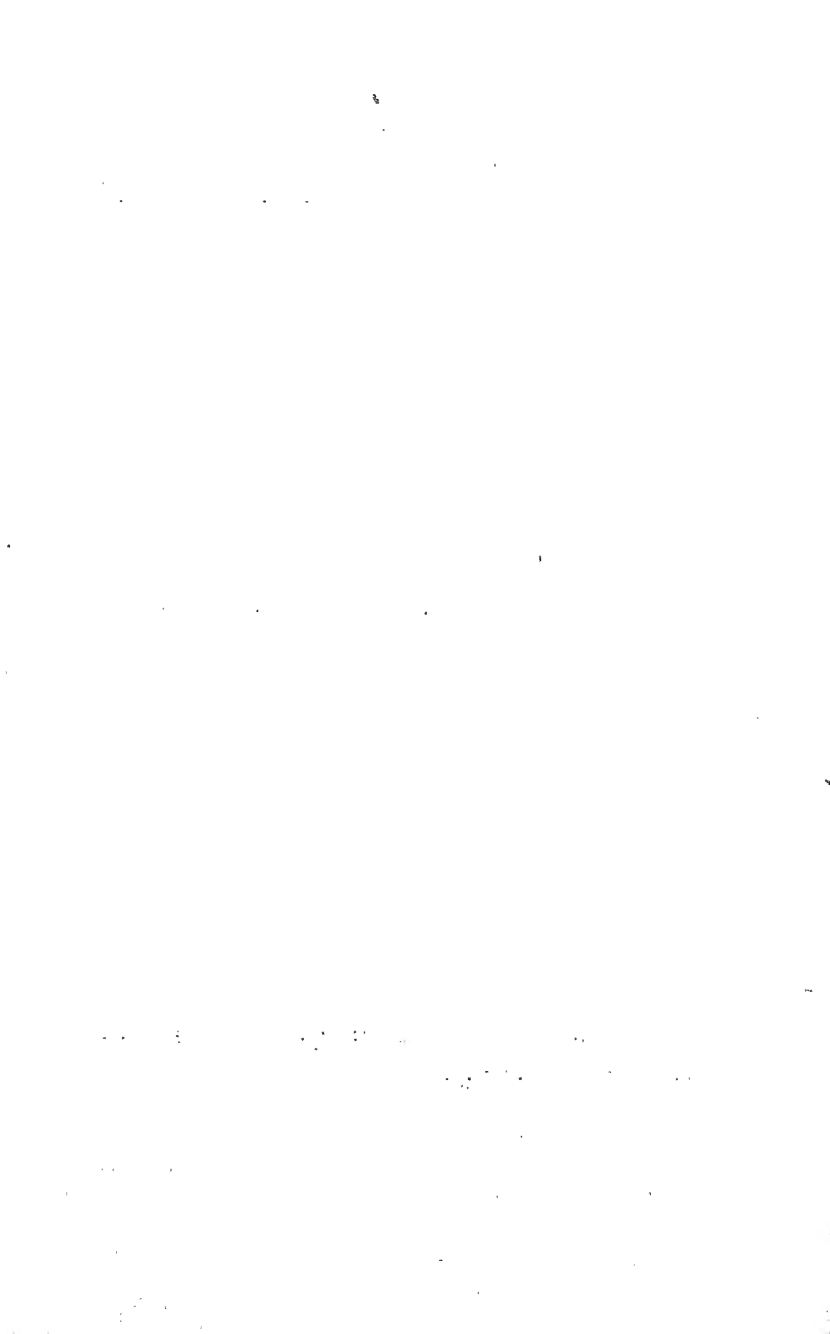
My special thanks are due to Dr. Gravely of the Madras Government Museum for his invaluable help.

D. R. Fyson.

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\* Pallava Architecture by A. H. Longhurst, Archaeological Survey of India.

Pallava Antiquities by Prof. Jouveau-Dubreuil. Indian Antiquary, November and December 1928; January and February 1929.



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# MAHABALIPURAM

MAHABALIPURAM was founded, or perhaps only enlarged, about 630 A.D., by the Pallava king Narasimhavarman I, surnamed Mamalla, but it has been suggested that the place may be identified with the *Malanga* mentioned by Ptolemy,



**Door-keeper.**

which gives it a more remote antiquity. Some authorities think the name should be Mamallapuram after king Mamalla; others that the present spelling is correct and that it signifies "the city of the great Bali," a legendary monarch whose story will be given later.

The Pallavas may have come originally from the far north, but they first appeared as a power to be reckoned with, in the Kistna district of the Andhra country. Pressed by the Andhras on the north they extended their sway southwards, and ruled over a considerable portion of South India for some five centuries, A.D. 300-800. They came into conflict with the Chalukyans, whose capital was Badami in the Bombay Presidency, and the Cholas from further south. Eventually the Cholas overwhelmed both Chalukyans and Pallavas.

## PALLAVA KINGS.

Simhavishnu	..	..	About	575-600 A.D.
Mahendravarman I	..	..	"	600-630 "
Narasimhavarman I	(Mamalla)	..	"	630-668 "
Mahendravarman II	..	..	"	668-670 "
Paramesvaravarman I	..	..	"	670-690 "
Narasimhavarman II	(Rajasimha)	..	"	690-715 "
Paramesvaravarman II	..	..	"	715-717 "

The Pallava capital was Kanchi, better known now under its anglicised name Conjeevaram, but Kanchi is still the Tamil form. Mahabalipuram was the sea-port. The Pallavas were adventurous sailors and traders. They

established contact with Ceylon, and possibly with Malay and Java. An inscription at Conjeevaram contains the following description of the Pallava Princes: "who were pious, who destroyed the excessively great pride of the Kali (age), who spoke the truth, who were profound, whose minds knew how to practise the *trivarga*, who assiduously honoured the aged, who forcibly subdued lust and the other internal foes, who excelled in the knowledge of weapons, who were firm, mighty and endowed with polity and modesty."\*

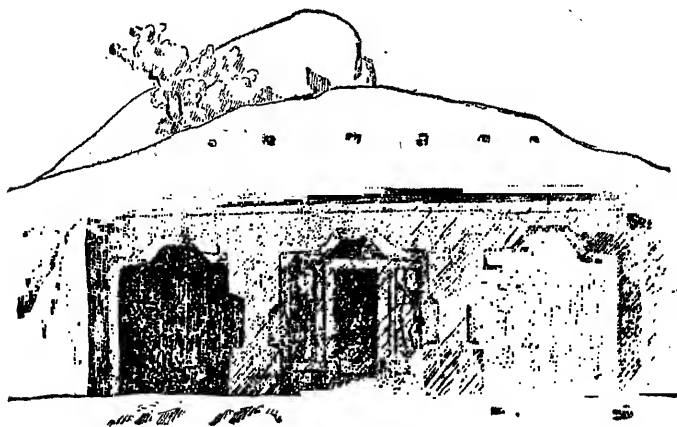
The early Pallava monarchs were probably Buddhist or Jain, but about A.D. 600 Mahendravarman I began to dedicate cave-temples to Siva. Though the architecture of Mahabalipuram belongs mainly to the period of his son, Mamalla, some of the cave-temples are of an earlier and more primitive type, which may indicate that the place had a reputation for sanctity before the city was founded there.

It is clear that Hindu temples of some kind must have existed in India in much earlier times, but they were built of wood or brick and none have survived. The Buddhist period has left numerous ruins, but the cave-temples are the earliest known examples of Hindu architecture in South India, and are found in various places. There is one, now used by Mohammedans, at Pallavaram only eleven miles from Madras, one at Trichinopoly and another at Dalavanur near Gingee, to mention but a few. These early cave-temples are very simple in plan. Out of the living rock is hewn a hall or veranda, called a *mandapa*, supported on pillars. This leads to an inner shrine, or shrines, still further recessed in the rock. The shrines usually contained a linga, and the holes in which the lingas stood may still be seen. Guardians, or door-keepers, are sculptured in panels on either side of the entrance. The

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\*E. Hultzsch, South Indian Inscriptions, Vol. I.

style of these is characteristic of the period. They are naturalistic figures, sometimes leaning on a club, sometimes raising a hand in salute. The pillars of the mandapa are massive and square with the corners chamfered off in the middle portion. The corbels are semi-circular and plain. In some of the caves the corbels are so roughly hewn as to be still angular, but this may be due to unfinished work. There are so many partially shaped rocks and caves that one must suppose some sudden interruption to have occurred.



**Kotikal Mandapa.**

The best examples here of this early type of temple are the **Kotikal Mandapa** at the northern end of the hill, facing west, and **Dharmaraja's Mandapa** under the lighthouse hill, facing east; though an inscription in the latter points to its having been built in the Mamalla period.

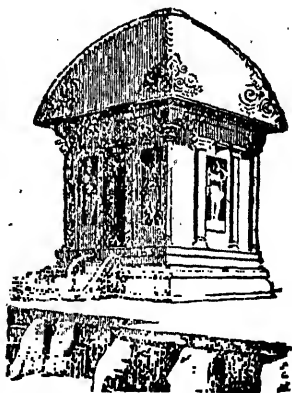
Most of the monuments at Mahabalipuram were hewn in the reign of Mamalla, about A.D. 610—640. They are *hewn not built*. In addition to some very beautiful cave-temples Mamalla made the Rathas, each of which is a free-standing temple, hewn from an enormous rock.

Ratha means a car, and the name has been given from the supposed resemblance to the great temple-cars of carved wood which are still used in religious ceremonies.

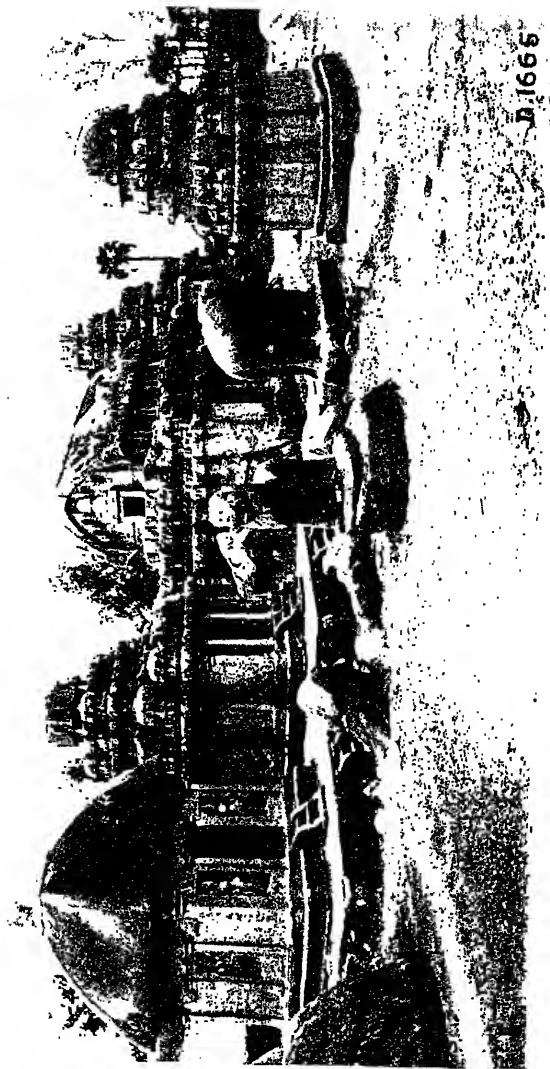
There are three small Rathas on the bank of the Canal, near the Travellers' Bungalow, but the most important group, known as the **Five Rathas**, is among the sand-dunes to the south of the hill. Local tradition has named these Rathas after the five Pandava brothers and their consort Draupadi. These heroes of the Mahabharata were banished for long years from their own kingdom, and the legend of their wanderings is sung throughout India. In reality the five Rathas have nothing to do with them, and are presumably the five shrines of the orthodox Saivite temple, dedicated to Siva, his consort Parvati, and his sons Ganesa and Subramanya and his chamberlain Chandikesvara.

With this group are the three great monolithic beasts, Elephant, Lion and Bull, vehicles respectively of Indra, god of storm and rain, Durga, the warlike goddess, and Siva or Mahadeva, the great god.

**Draupadi's Ratha** is the smallest and is built in the form of a hut. Huts of similar shape are represented in the Amaravati sculptures (Madras Museum). The roof of the ordinary hut was of thatch, resting on curved bamboo supports, but those used for temples may have been overlaid with sheets of copper or brass, as in Kashmir and some parts of India at the present day. The design on the roof



**Draupadi's Ratha.**



D.1665

The five Pandava Rathas—General view.

*By the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.*

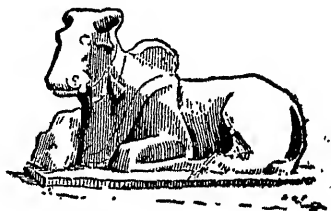


of Draupadi's Ratha is suggestive of embossed metal.

Inside the shrine is a carving in relief of Durga with attendants. Durga is repeated in a panel on each of the three outer walls. Durga is the fighting aspect of Siva's consort, Parvati, who is also known in an angry aspect as Kali. In all these sculptures she is represented with a band round the breast, an ornament which serves to distinguish her from other forms of Siva's consort.

The pediment upon which both Draupadi's and Arjuna's Rathas rest is ornamented with alternate elephant's and lion's heads.

The other four Rathas show various characteristic features of Buddhist architecture. It is known from ancient writings and remains of buildings that the Buddhists formed *viharas* (monasteries) and lived



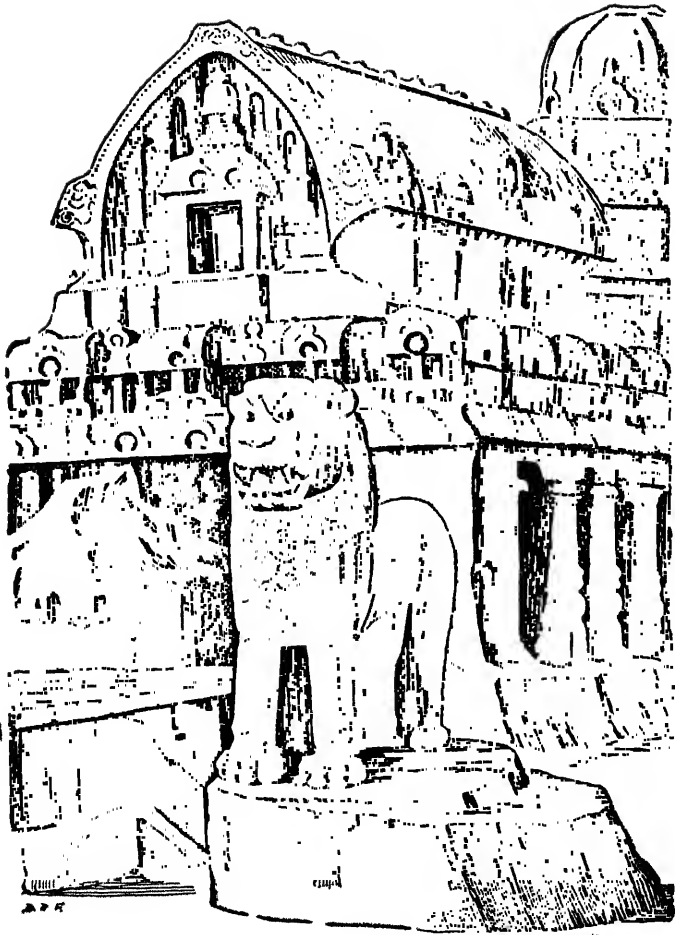
**Siva's Bull.**

together in considerable numbers. Each monk lived in a cell and the cells were built round a central hall. Originally the cells were simple huts and the same shape was copied in stone. The curve of the bamboo roof made a horse-shoe shaped gable-end, and in this was set a window. The buildings that remain have only one storey, but representations in bas-reliefs show them with several storeys. The great Brazen Palace at Anuradhapura in Ceylon is described as having had nine storeys.

It is thought that these Rathas are models in miniature of a Buddhist vihara. There are rows of small cells, each with its gable-window. The window has also been adapted as an ornamentation of the cornice. The interior has only been partially excavated, forming a veranda.

Other Buddhist motifs that may be found in the Rathas and in the cave-temples are the frieze of fat little dwarfs under the cornice, the conventional lotus and the lion. A frieze of geese, similar to that of the dwarfs, is found in Buddhist work, but the goose, *hamsa*, is also a Hindu symbol, being the vehicle of Brahma and Saraswati. Some of the shrines are approached by a small flight of steps of which the lowest is semi-circular. In Ceylon this curved step was developed into the beautiful "moonstones" and decorated with elaborately carved designs. Lions are used by both Hindus and Buddhists in various forms, but the form characteristic of Mahabalipuram is the sitting lion at the base of a pillar. They appear in the veranda pillars of the Rathas and in many of the cave-temples. Some of them are horned. Lions were presumably found in India in early times or the surname Simha (lion) would not have been so frequently assumed, nor the lion commonly taken as a symbol. It is possible, however, that the lion-form in design, was introduced from Assyria, and that the animal itself was little known to Indian sculptors, so their treatment of it remained conventional. This is very noticeable in contrast with their delightfully naturalistic renderings of bulls, elephants, and other animals with which they were familiar.

**Arjuna's Ratha** is next to Draupadi's, on the same plinth. It has well-carved figures, some of which may be portraits, in panels round the outside. In the centre of the back wall is a figure of Indra on an elephant. A broken head of Siva was found buried in the sand and has been placed inside the shrine. Arjuna's and Dharmaraja's Rathas are each crowned by a dome of peculiar angled shape. It has been suggested that the idea originated in the inverted chatty, which was, and still is, placed over the wooden ribs of a thatched roof to keep them dry. More probably the dome is a modified version of the



**Bhima's Ratha.**

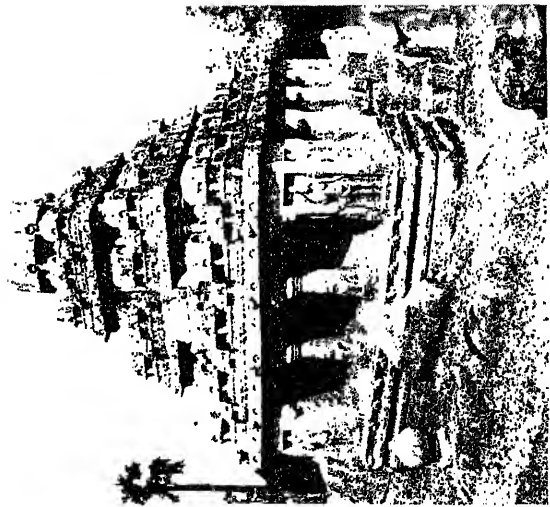
Buddhist stupa. The vase-shaped finials which surmounted these domes are on the ground.

**Bhima's Ratha** has a waggon-roof. The development of this plan in later buildings led to the enormous *gopuras* (towers) so characteristic of South Indian Temples, and which may be seen at Tirukallikundram. The lion-pillars and the veranda are very roughly hewn and unfinished, but the veranda is a cool place to sit in to enjoy the peculiar charm of this secluded spot.

**Dharmaraja's Ratha** is the largest. A panel on the back wall, outside, contains a curious figure, half man, half woman, which represents Ardhanarisvara, in whom Siva and Parvati are combined. Small figures of lions and elephants decorate the pediment. The upper verandas have a series of sculptured figures in panels, all round, and a shrine on the western face. Access to the first storey is by wooden steps at the southern end, and stone steps on the east lead from the first to the second veranda. The lower and large shrine is empty, but the upper one has a *Somaskanda* image of Siva and his consort Parvati, with their infant son Subrahmanya.

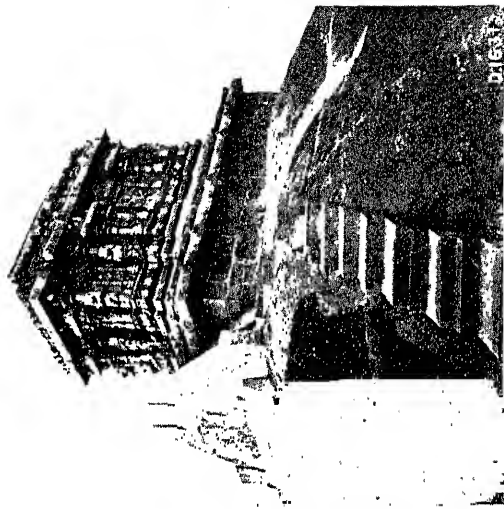
The inscriptions over the various figures are in Sanskrit, but the script is the oldest of the four different forms found here. They were first deciphered by B. J. Babington, Secretary of the Royal Asiatic Society, and published in the Transactions of the Society in 1830. He considered them to be names of deities but more recent authorities declare them to be *birudas* (titles) of Pallava Kings.

**Sahadeva's Ratha** is assigned to the twin brothers. Sahadeva and Nakula. It is apsidal with a porch in front. This may be a model of the Buddhist *chaitya*, in which the monks met for worship. The early Buddhists had no images, but they enshrined relics of the Buddha in a *stupa*, which was a dome or bell-shaped building containing a small chamber. This became an object of worship.



**Dharmaraja's Rath.**

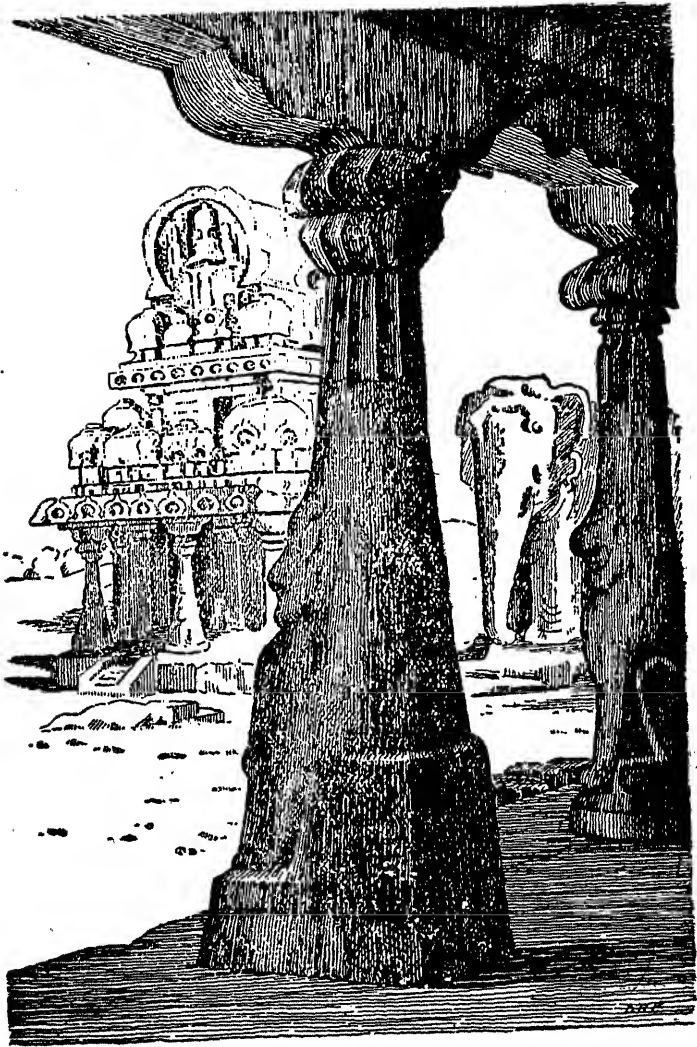
*By the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.*



**Isvara Temple.**

*By the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.*





**Sahadeva's Ratha.**

The chaitya originated in a small stupa with a shelter for worshippers in front. When this was enclosed the walls were carried round the back of the stupa, forming an apse and the shelter was transformed into a porch, or enlarged into a hall.

Mr. N. Venkataramanayya, who has studied the origins of South Indian Temples, traces the word chaitya still further back, to the worship of trees. He thinks the so-called umbrella ornament which usually crowns a Buddhist stupa is the conventionalised representation of a spreading tree. An umbrella in India is the emblem of royalty, and the other theory is that this emblem was assigned to the Buddha as the greatest possible mark of respect.

**Kudu** is the name given to the horse-shoe shaped window when degenerated into mere ornament. The stages of its development form a useful guide to ascertaining the date of a building, as was pointed out by

Prof. Jouveau-Dubreuil.

Here it is seen in the typical Pallava form. The framework has a shovel-head, and a face looks out of the window. In the succeeding Chola Period, A. D. 800—1350, the shovel was converted



**Pallava kudu  
and frieze  
of geese.**



**A Vijaya-  
nagar kudu.**

into a lion's head, with a long neck. In the Vijayanagar Period, A. D. 1350—1600, the lion's head and the horse-shoe framework became more ornate and the face reduced, or replaced by a lotus, or a circular boss. The kudu in a modified form is still used in modern temple architecture.

A similar process of development distinguishes the Corbels. The Pallava corbel was semi-circular, either



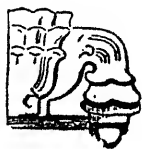
Vishnu in the Mahishasura Mandapa.

plain or scalloped. The Chola corbel was square, sometimes with the outer corner cut off, and it began to change



**A Pallava corbel.**

into the lotus form which was fully developed in the Vijayanagar Period. This was further evolved to a more ornate form, resembling a plantain-bud,

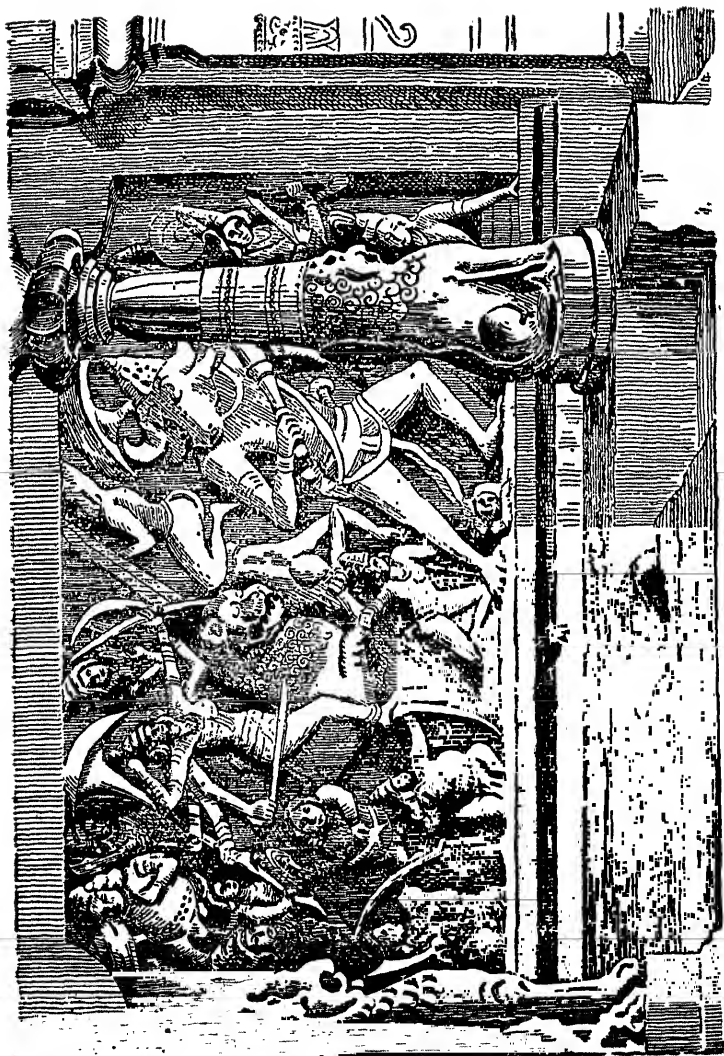


**A Vijayanagar corbel.**

in what is known as the Modern Period, which began about 1600 A.D., and extends to the present day.

**The Mahishasura Mandapa**, the finest of all the cave-temples, is on the lighthouse hill, facing out to sea. It contains three inner shrines, the central one being approached by a porch with lion-pillars. These lions are beautifully carved and the pillars have elaborate cushion-capitals, surmounted by a square abacus. The central shrine contains a bas-relief of Siva, Parvati, and Subrahmanya, similar to that in Dharmaraja's Ratha, except that Siva's foot rests here on the bull, Nandi. The door-keeper on the extreme left has a horned head-dress like that of the Trisula heads on the Ganesa Ratha. On the two side walls are remarkable bas-reliefs. On the south wall, Vishnu lies asleep on the coils of the serpent Sesha whose five hoods arch over Vishnu's head. This is no common sleep, but the trance of concentrated thought as Vishnu creates the world. Heavenly and earthly beings protect his slumbers.

On the northern wall Durga rides her lion to victory against the buffalo-headed Demon, Mahishasura. She is eight-armed, but only the two arms drawing a bow are prominent and her figure is singularly graceful. The story symbolizes the eternal conflict between Good and Evil.



Mahishasura Mandapa, Durga.

On the pilasters at each side of the cave are graved the symbols of Vishnu, a wheel set in a flaming circle, and a flaming conch.

**The Olakkaneswara Temple** on the hill above is *built*, not hewn, and like the Shore Temple is of later date. It has the rampant lions of the Rajasimha period. It was used as a lighthouse before the present lighthouse was built.

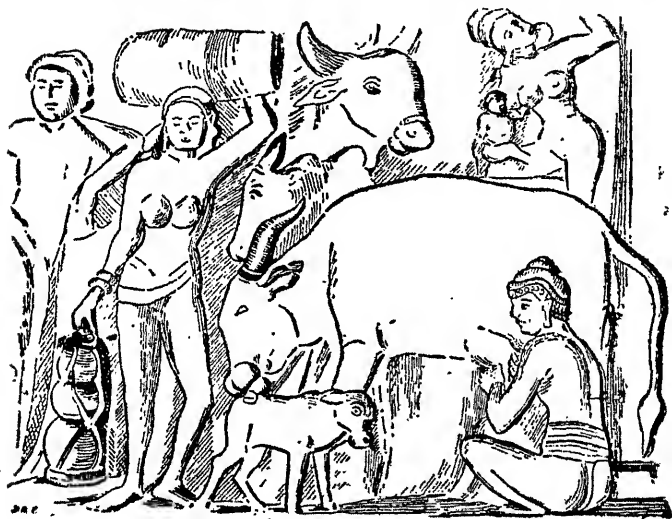
**The Krishna Mandapa** is near the village on the east side of the hill. The veranda here is built out in front of the natural rock on which the Krishna scene is carved. Flanking the entrance steps is a balustrade with the *makara* (dragon) design frequently used by both Buddhist and Hindu builders. The outer pillars have the sitting lion in the traditional form, but late corbels, cut from a separate block. The inner pillars have square bases with bas-reliefs and the *nagabandha*, an ornament like a cobra's hood, which first appeared about A. D. 1100 and afterwards came into regular use for this type of pillar. Originally, the rock-carvings were almost certainly open to the sky, like those of Arjuna's Penance, and the mandapa was built on some centuries later. The main carving is a composite



**Pillar showing  
nagabandha.**

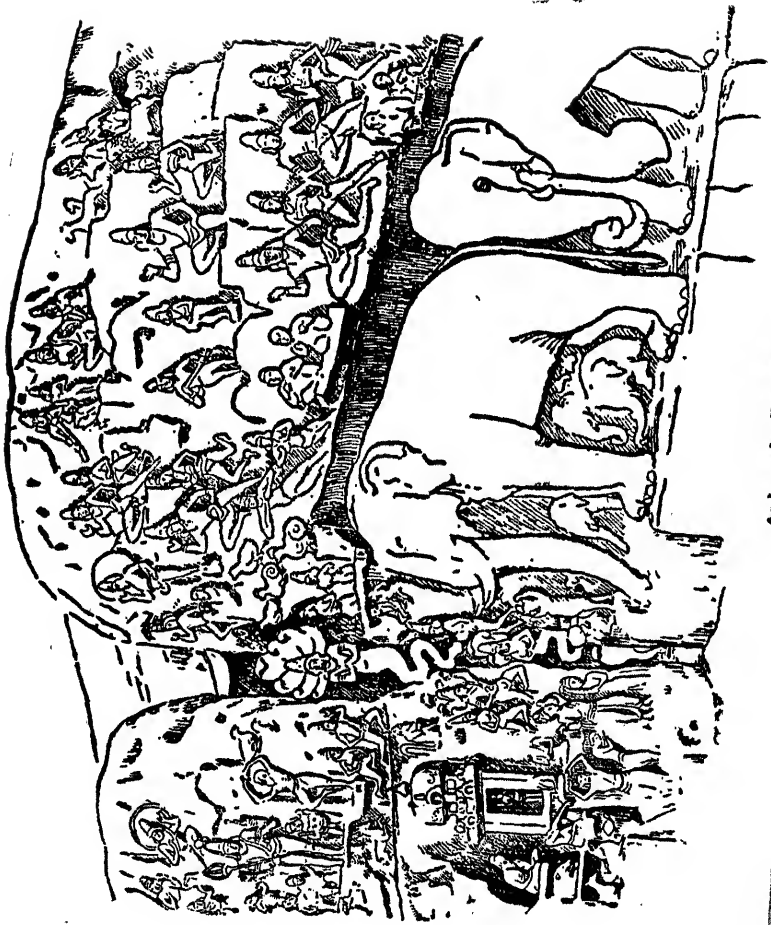
picture representing scenes in the life of Krishna. Krishna was born in Mathura (Muttra) of royal blood, but his life was threatened and he was smuggled out of the city and taken to Brindaban, where he was brought up in the house of Nanda, the cowherd, and Yasoda, his wife.

He is represented here holding up the hill of Govardhana. The legend is that in their adoration of Krishna the people neglected their usual worship of Indra and thereby roused Indra to wrath. Gathering his storm-clouds Indra poured forth a deluge of rain to destroy his former worshippers, but Krishna raised Govardhana and held the hill aloft to shelter his followers till Indra's wrath was spent. The remainder of the sculpture is a charming



**Milking group in the Krishna Mandapa.**

pastoral scene, but a small figure playing a flute may be another form of Krishna who is frequently portrayed in this attitude. The man in loin-cloth and turban milking his cow while the cow licks her calf, from a picture still true to the daily life of India. On the side wall to the left are some lions and curious heraldic creatures, and on the right, lying on a shelf of rock is a beautifully modelled bull.



Arjuna's Penance.



**View of Arjuna's Penance.**

*By the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.*



**The Pancha Pandava Mandapa** is an unfinished cave-temple with lion-pillars. The cave is deeply recessed at each end. The corbels above the outer pillars have been carved roughly to the shape of a prancing horse and rider.

**Arjuna's Penance** is the name given to another great rock-sculpture on the same face of the hill. It is an enormous and complicated carved picture, centering on a natural cleft in the rock. There is a similar but unfinished picture below the lighthouse, and a rock with a cleft in it has been chosen for that also.

There is considerable controversy over the interpretation. The ascetic, standing on one leg with arms upraised, on the upper portion of the rock, to the spectator's left of the cleft, has been identified with Arjuna, and the god near him is Siva.

The legend is that Arjuna, third of the five Pandava brothers, set out to win from Siva, by stern austerities, the gift of a divine weapon with which he might one day help his brothers to regain their kingdom. He ascended the holy Himalaya, leading the life of an ascetic with ever-increasing austerity. One morning while he worshipped before a linga a wild boar charged upon him. Quickly he seized his bow and shot the beast. At the same moment a second arrow pierced the boar and Arjuna was confronted by an angry huntsman, who, with his retinue, had just come up. The two fought, but Arjuna, finding his own strength of no avail, retired, and returned to his worship. He threw a garland round the linga, but behold it was round the neck of the hunter. Arjuna, recognising Siva, prostrated himself at his feet, and Siva granted him the long-sought boon, the divine bow—Pasupata.

This story has given its name to the sculpture, but it does not take into account the other figures of the picture. The fact that all turn towards the cleft, and the presence

of Nagas, seem to indicate some kind of water-worship. Nagas, half human, half snake, are usually associated with water. They play a large part in the mythology of India. Often represented as a cobra only, without the human body, they are carved on stones and set up in groups under pipal trees in many villages. They are still worshipped, especially, by women desirous of children.

Mr. Longhurst thinks there was a tank above the cleft; grooves in the rock there being footings for retaining walls of brick and cement, and that water was poured down from it on ceremonial occasions. Ascetics and hermits have always resorted to the banks of sacred rivers, and if this water represented the sacred river Ganges their presence in the picture would be natural.

The figure of Siva may be interpreted by another story—that of the Bhiksatana, or Beggar form, in which Siva is usually represented nude, with a few jewels and his hair twisted high on his head. He has four arms, carrying trident and drum and is accompanied by two or three *ganas* (dwarfs) and an antelope. All these may be seen in the sculpture. According to the story, Siva, in anger, cut off one of the four heads of Brahma and the skull of Brahma stuck to his left hand and could not be removed. He was condemned to wander the earth as a naked beggar in penance for this offence, but when he reached Brahma Kapala in the Himalaya the sanctity of the place gave him absolution, and the skull fell off.

The cat performing the same austerities as the ascetic, while mice play at its feet, may be a reference to the fabled cat Dadhikarna who used this device as a ruse to entice his prey.

Another appropriate myth, of which Bhagiratha is the hero, recounts the coming of the sacred river Ganges.

Ganga, the daughter of Himalaya and the Sun, lived in heaven. Bhagiratha greatly desired that Ganga should come to earth for he believed that if her sacred waters should wash the ashes of his ancestors their spirits would be freed from sin and would ascend to heaven. Bhagiratha left his kingdom and practised austerities in the Himalaya. At last Brahma appeared to him and granted his prayer, but said that the fall of Ganga from heaven would sweep away the earth, unless Siva received her first. Bhagiratha by further austerities secured the help of Siva. Ganga plunged from heaven and fell on Siva's head, but her torrent was lost in Siva's matted hair and could not reach the earth. Bhagiratha's prayers once more availed and Ganga fell to earth, and in a mighty river followed Bhagiratha to the ocean. All the hosts of heaven and earth hastened to see and worship the wonderful stream and to bathe in the holy waters.

If the cleft represents Ganga the whole carving is an apt illustration of this story. The whole spirit of the picture is of people hastening towards the cleft. A few are seated, perhaps resting by the way. The hermit, carved boldly in the round, sitting before a shrine, has reached his destination and is lost in meditation. His disciples carry out their various avocations. The two seated have unfortunately lost their heads. One is practising austerity in the same attitude as Arjuna and the cat; one fetches water; and another is returning from the river and carries his cloth which he has washed and wrung out. This has sometimes been described as a cornucopia, signifying plenty, which is, however, not an Indian symbol. The hurrying figures are mostly in pairs and usually man and wife. The men wear bracelets on both wrist and upper arm, but most of the women have none. A band across the breast has been mentioned as peculiar to Durga in these sculptures, but in this picture several women are wearing it. Lions

figure also in the strange composite scene, so it may be that the women with breast-bands are all representative of Durga. The two figures surmounted by large haloes, to right and left of the cleft, are Surya the Sun and Chandra the Moon. The greatest charm of the whole scene is the animal life represented. The huge elephants, the deer (one lying down and scratching its nose with its hoof), a wild boar, a bear in its cave, a tortoise, a pair of monkeys, jungle-fowl alert with curiosity, and various lions, all take their part in this rush to worship Ganga.

Yet another explanation describes the scene as Vishnu's Parādevatā Paramārthya.\* This is the declaration by Siva that Vishnu is the supreme Lord, and Vishnu is therefore represented in a shrine while Siva stands in the open air. Man and beast flock to hear Siva's declaration. According to this theory the sculpture was made as an object-lesson to the people at a time of transition from Saivism to Vaishnavism, a transition which certainly did occur. Vaishnavites are in possession of the Varaha Temple at the present day.

Just beyond Arjuna's Penance is a quaint **Monkey Group**, and further on, near the Trimurthi Temple, another charming rock-sculpture, of **Elephants** with a monkey and a peacock.

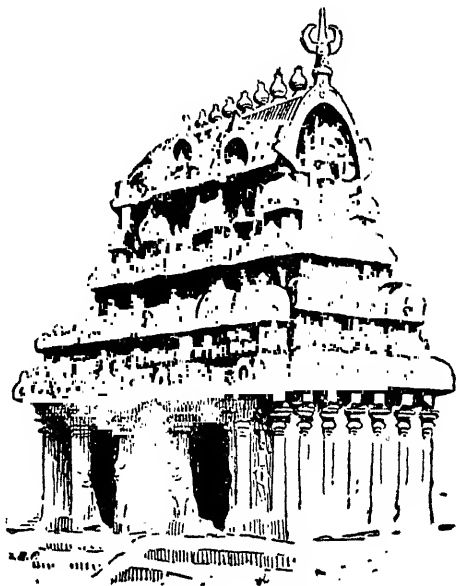
**The Ganesa Ratha** near by is the only one in which the finials in the shape of heads wearing the horned or trident-shaped head-dress are still intact. The image of Ganesa in the shrine is a modern introduction. Ganesa is the god of prosperity and is worshipped at the outset of any undertaking. He is the son of Siva and Parvati. His peculiar form is thus accounted for. Parvati, while performing her toilet, set Ganesa to guard the door. Siva

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\*R. Srinivasa Raghava Ayyangar, Indian Antiquary, June 1931.

returning and being refused admittance, drew his sword and cut off Ganesa's head. "Oh," cried Parvati, "you have slain our son." "That is soon mended," said Siva, and going out he cut off the head of an elephant, and placing it on Ganesa's shoulders, restored him to life.

Another version of the story ascribes Ganesa's death to the evil eye of Saturn. At the great assembly in honour of Ganesa's birth Saturn entered with downcast eyes, for fear a curse should fall from his glance upon the young god. Parvati laughed at his fears and bade him look at her beautiful son, but when Saturn did so. Ganesa's head



Ganesa Ratha.

fell off. Vishnu then came to the rescue with an elephant's head and Ganesa was restored to life in this strange shape.

There is an inscription in this Ratha which is a panegyric of Siva and gives no definite information.

**The Trimurthi Temple** is a cave-temple with three cells. The door-keepers are in profile, in very narrow panels, and two have beards, an unusual feature. In the shrines are figures of the Hindu Trinity—Brahma the Creator, in

the centre, Siva the Destroyer, on his right, and Vishnu, the Preserver, on his left. On a separate panel outside is Durga, standing on a buffalo's head.

**The Gopi's Churn** is a large rock, hollowed out into a circular cistern.



**Varaha Mandapa, Lakshmi.**

**The Varaha Mandapa** is close to the Ganesa Ratha and faces west. It has handsome pillars with horned lions, and on the ceiling conventional lotuses, of the Buddhist type, with remains of colour. On the walls are four large bas-reliefs. On the back wall, to the left of the

shrine, **Lakshmi** sits on a lotus while elephants pour water over her head. She has four women attendants. It will be noticed that the anklets of these women, drooping over the heel, and the waterpots, are the same shape as those still in common use.

On the right stands Durga under a royal umbrella, with attendant lion and deer, and a devotee cutting off his head as a sacrifice.

On the side walls Vishnu is represented in the Boar Incarnation, and as an eight-armed giant bestriding the three worlds, which is the culmination of the story of the Dwarf Incarnation. The legend runs as follows: King Bali, the monarch from whom some authorities derive the name Mahabalipuram, having conquered the three worlds, earth, air and ocean, ruled them with justice and prosperity. His pride, however, aroused the jealousy of Indra, who appealed to Vishnu for redress. Vishnu could not openly make war upon so good a king, so he adopted a ruse. He took the form of a Brahman dwarf, and begged the king to give him as much of his realm as he could cover in three strides, whereon he might sit and meditate. The king graciously consented to this modest request, whereupon Vishnu became an eight-armed giant. With his first stride he covered the earth, with the second he covered the heavens, and with the third he trod the unfortunate Bali into the Underworld.

In the background of this sculpture are Brahma with three faces (his fourth face being at the back is not shown) and four arms, on a lotus-throne; and two flying figures with haloes, representing Surya the Sun and Chandra the Moon.

**The Varaha Temple** is still used for worship and is therefore closed to all but Hindus. It stands at the south end of the hill, facing west, but the entrance to the cave is hidden by a massive stone wall of Vijayanagar style.

The cave-temple contains somewhat similar sculptures to those in the Varaha Mandapa, and in addition two interesting portrait groups of Pallava Kings. Each king has two wives. Names are inscribed in Pallava-Grantha characters above the niches in which they stand, but as several Pallava Kings bear the same name it is difficult to ascertain the date, and authorities differ.\* Probably they are Mahendravarman I and his son Narasimhavarman I (Mamalla).

A Tamil inscription on a slab formerly in the floor, but now placed upright, records a grant of land to the temple.

This was written in the time of Nandivarman Pallavamalla, who was chosen from a collateral branch to succeed Paramesvaravarman II, the last of the Simhavishnu line. Episodes in connection with the accession of Nandivarman Pallavamalla are depicted in a series of sculptures, with descriptive labels, in the Vaikuntha-Perumal temple at Conjeevaram.

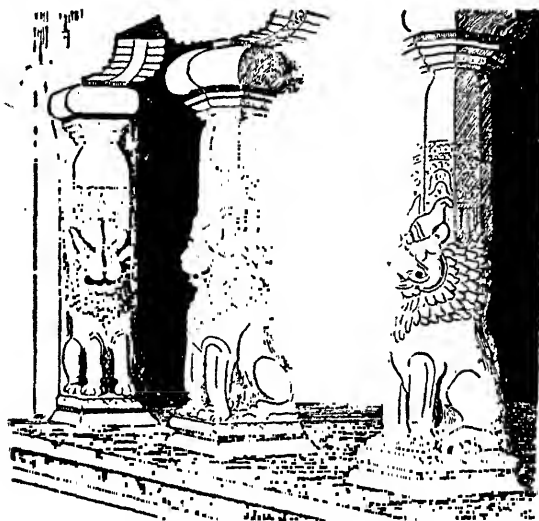
**The Ramanuja Mandapa** has some of the best lion-pillars, but the carving on the walls has been entirely hacked away. It is thought that when a Vaishnavite revival succeeded the Saivite period the followers of Vishnu in fanatical zeal defaced and destroyed the symbols of Siva-Lingas and Nandis, found scattered in the jungle, have been set up on the roadside near the post office in the village. Lingas show some development in form. Those of the early period are cylindrical, later they are hexagonal or octagonal: in the Rajasimha period they are fluted; for example, the large one in the Shore Temple. They are made not of the local stone but of imported black Cuddapah limestone. On the hill are various steps and grooves in the rock. Mr. Longhurst thinks that the

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\*Rao Bahadur H. Krishna Sastri: *Memoirs of the Archæological Survey of India*, No. 26.

T. G. Aravamutham: "Portrait Sculpture in South India."

citadel stood here and that these grooves were foundations for brick or wooden buildings.



**Ramanuja Mandapa.**

There are also rocks marked out roughly in squares, which show the first stage in the excavation of a rock-temple. The squares give an indication of dimensions, from which the builders could calculate the various proportions.

**Krishna's Butterpat** is an enormous perched block.

**The Lion Throne** is a large rock-couch with a well-carved lion at the head.

**The Five-Celled Saivite Temple** facing west, near the large tank, has massive outer pillars of the early type, but the inner pillars are more ornate. Among the door-keepers there is one particularly graceful figure, unfortunately mutilated. The frieze of geese, so often weathered almost beyond recognition, is in better condition here than elsewhere.

**The Gateway** on the top of the hill is of typical Vijayanagar style and shows that Mahabalipuram remained a place of some importance till at least the fifteenth century.

The building is of great blocks of stone neatly fitted together without mortar. The door-keepers carry scrolls which twine up the pillars over their heads. The *bow-legged* sitting lion in bas-relief, and the lion-headed kudus are also characteristic of his period.



**Bow-legged  
Lion.**

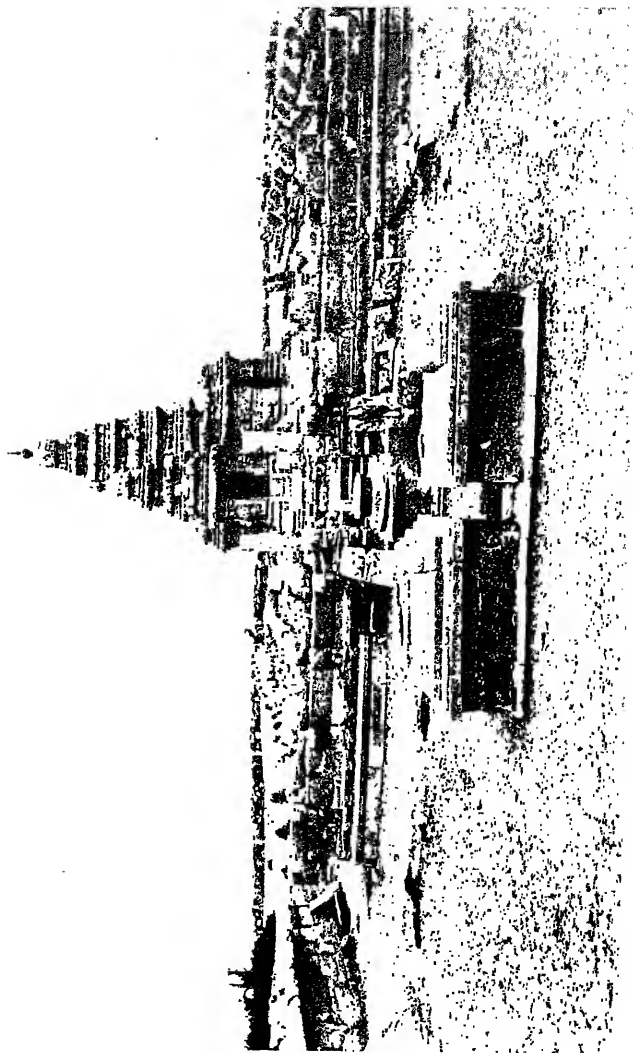
The Vijayanagar Empire, with its capital at the present Hampi in the Deccan, flourished from about 1350 to 1600. It was overthrown by Mahomedan invasions from the north. South India was thenceforward split up into a multitude of petty States and was only reunited under British Rule.



**The Shore Temple.**

From the Gateway a fine view is obtained eastwards over the village and the modern temple to the Shore Temple by the sea, and westwards over the backwater to the far ridge of Tirukallikundram.

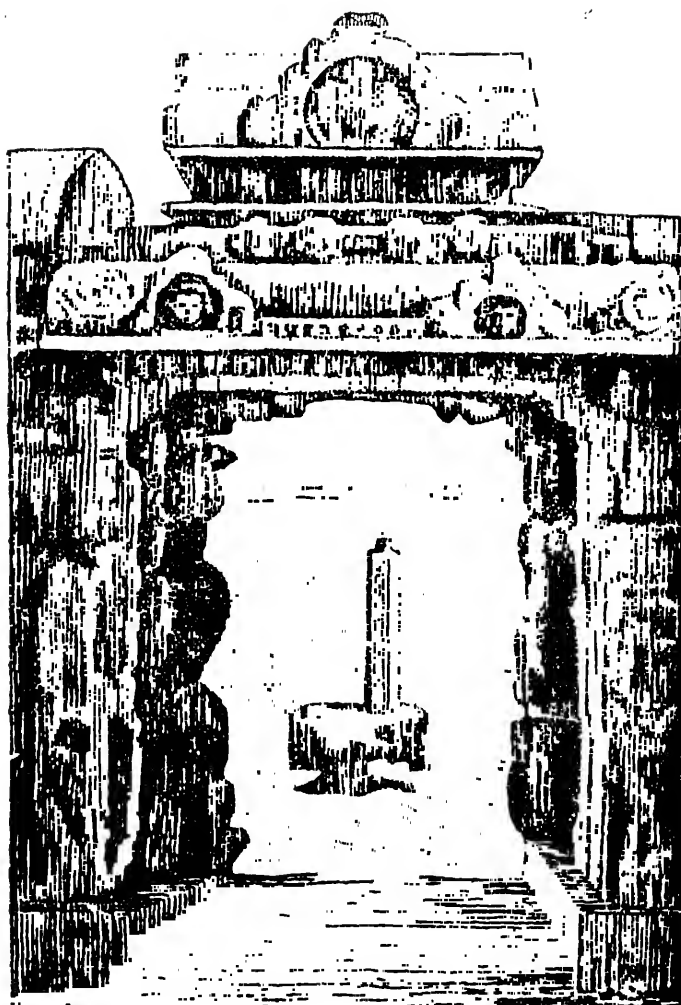
**The Shore Temple** was *built*, not hewn from living rock, in the period of Narasimhavarman I, surnamed



**Shore Temple—West view.**

*By the kind permission of the Archaeological Survey of India.*

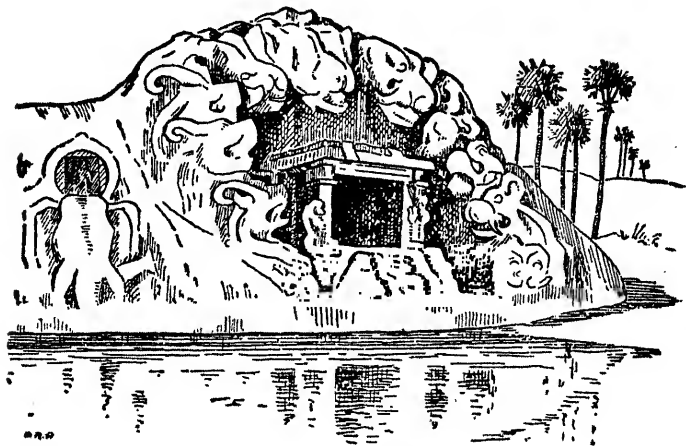




Archway, Shore Temple.

Rajasimha, A.D. 690—715. Rajasimha also built the Kailasanatha Temple at Conjeevaram, which is the finest example of his work.

Tradition asserts that the Shore Temple is the only survivor of the Seven Pagodas, which once graced a beautiful city. It is even said that the summits of the other pagodas may be seen on occasion glittering beneath the waves. Legend has it that the king, through the favour of a nymph, visited the courts of Indra in heaven, and on his return vowed to make his city even more resplendent. This aroused the jealousy of Indra who descended with a great storm and caused the ocean to rise and overwhelm the city.



**Tiger Cave, Saluvankuppam.**

Whether or no there is any foundation for the tradition remains a matter of conjecture, but certain it is that many carved and shaped stones lie strewn upon the shore.

The stone of the temple is much weathered but the carved lions on pilasters and on the courtyard wall are still recognizable and are *rampant*, with fore-paws upraised, instead of sitting as in the earlier period. These rampant

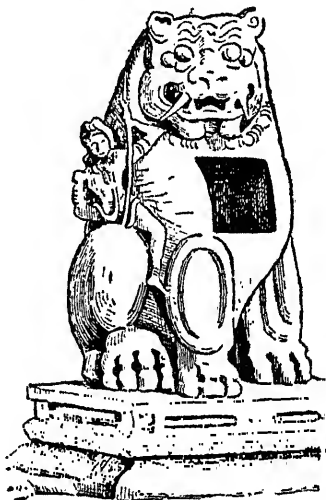
lions, together with monstrous heads, may be seen in the curious shrine known as the **Tiger Cave**, at Saluvankuppam, two miles along the coast to the north.

Close to the Shore Temple on the north is a rock containing a shrine, and Mahishasura is carved with great arms claspings the rock as he flees from Durga's lion.

Other carved rocks lie to the south. On one is a horse, the vehicle of Kubera, god of wealth.

A Tamil inscription on the Shore Temple gives Jalasayana as the name of the temple, and states that the Chola King, Rajarajadevi (A. D. 1023—1064) conquered a number of countries among which are Ceylon, Coorg, Malabar and Ganjam—an extensive territory.

The Shore Temple is loveliest at sunset, but at all times it is fascinating, standing as it does with its feet in the waves. Vishnu lies asleep in a shrine on the south-side, Durga rides her lion in the courtyard with a headless buffalo at her feet, and Siva's bulls lie round in silent guardianship.



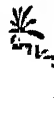
**Durga's Lion.**



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